

NEW PUBLICATIONS.

LEGAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN.

THE LAW OF HUSBAND AND WIFE: Compiled for popular use. By Lelia Josephine Robinson, 32mo. Boston: Lee & Shepard.

Whatever may be thought of the propriety or wisdom of women becoming lawyers and practising with their "brethren" at the bar, this little volume demonstrates clearly enough that there is one branch of legal work that can be done well by a woman, and that is the writing of a popular book upon a legal subject. If all judicial opinions and legal treatises were written with the conscientious, perspicuity and accuracy that characterize this modest work of less than 200 pages upon one of the most difficult branches of the law, there would be very much less litigation and less need of counsel's aid in obtaining adjudications as to the meaning of previous adjudications.

We have very little **stat.** as usual thing, in the usefulness of medical works intended to make every layman his own physician or legal writings that are warranted to supersede the necessity of employing counsel to solve legal problems. And whatever the merits of this particular work may be, the author will perhaps be as ready as any one to admit that she has not succeeded in providing for the professional reader, for whom the book is primarily intended, such information on the law governing the relation of husband and wife as will direct persons from consulting competent counsel when the emergency involving such questions arises in their own experience. Indeed this clear-headed writer shows her appreciation of this fact when she says: "But the niceties of the distinctions and contradictions between the two systems, that of the common law and that of equity, have made the law of husband and wife a most complicated and difficult one, and the passage of innumerable statutes on the subject, while they have greatly relieved the hardships of the legal condition of both husband and wife, have by no means lessened those of counsel, whose business it is to ascertain just what that condition is."

Yet it does not follow that this little book will not serve a useful purpose. The author who, despite her sex, is in active practice at the Boston bar, has largely devoted her professional labor to cases involving the legal rights of women. It is for them, and especially for married women, that she here writes. She is able to give them much information respecting the development of the law of marital relations from the time when the English common law only recognized the man's existence and property rights as they were merged in those of her husband, down to the enactment of the most liberal statutes of Western States, that give to the married woman all the individual privileges that are enjoyed by her husband while imposing upon her the same obligations. Appended to the excellent series of chapters on cognate subjects is a still more valuable compilation or abstract of the statutes of the several States on the wife's legal status, the claims of widow and widower on property, and on the divorce laws of the respective States. If the abstract of the laws of New York can be taken as a criterion, the work has been done with care and thoroughness, although the writer appears to have stumbled over the provision of our statute of distributions in the case of a widow whose wife has died without will or issue.

The book, besides its usefulness to women throughout the country who desire to inform themselves generally upon their legal status, will also serve to emphasize the fact, upon which every well informed lawyer finds occasion to comment, that while the statutes governing the relation of husband and wife in the various States are still widely diversified, yet the constant tendency throughout the country is in the direction of such liberal and impartial legislation as will finally result in the universal recognition of the rights of the woman to stand on an equal footing in all respects with her husband before the law.

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